



Report Should Put Rest to Moth Spray Concern

The Herald's View

April 10, 2008

Excerpts below, for full view article please view: http://www.montereyherald.com/editorials/ci_8910176?nclink_check=1

Despite what spraying opponents are saying, people worrying about the health effects of the spray program against the light brown apple moth should be reassured by last week's report from a team of state scientists...

The state Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment could not find any correlation between the spraying and some 460 reports of respiratory distress in the days after applications in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties last fall...

...The core arguments against the spraying are that the state has not proved the need for spraying, at least from a scientific standpoint, and has not proved that the spray is safe. Now, some of the same opponents are backing themselves into a scientific corner by arguing that the state should accept their views based on severely insufficient evidence. The state team found that the number of complaints did not represent any spike from the normal incidence of respiratory complaints within the general population, that almost no medical tests had been performed to establish a link to the pheromone spraying, and that only sketchy information was documented about anyone's length of exposure or the onset of symptoms.

Careful reading of the state's report (www.oehha.org/risk/pdf/LBAM041008.pdf) on the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment Web site shows that this was not a case of state bureaucrats simply reviewing complaint forms gathered by the opponents and rejecting them as inconclusive. The team was made up of nine people, including a physician, three people with doctorates and two veterinarians. Its work was reviewed by a team of nine, including three physicians and four people with doctorates. It analyzed the complaints in depth by location and time, looking for areas of commonality, and found little or nothing to support the argument that the spray is dangerous.

Wisely, the team went a step further and called for more formal procedures for collecting reports on illnesses and symptoms when spraying resumes in June and spreads into a larger swath of the San Francisco Bay Area. That assessment work, which also will involve the state Department of Pesticide Regulation and the state Department of Public Health, will entail more standardized reporting procedures and an educational process encouraging anyone with symptoms to be seen by a physician and to call the same repository of information.

The state officials did not suggest that anyone either imagined or fabricated symptoms. Instead, they essentially concluded that, for most people, the symptoms and the spraying were coincidental. While that is no guarantee of safety, it supports the increasingly solid opinion that there are many other, more serious threats to health and the environment that would benefit from the type of attention the moth spray has received.

###